

Essington, PA – Two months after a Government Accounting Office (GAO) report disapproved of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) decision not to consider the total costs or conduct a cost-benefit analysis before proceeding with its air space redesign plan, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) questioned the planning of another major initiative by the agency involving Philadelphia International Airport (PHL). The FAA held a public hearing on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for its Capacity Enhancement Program (CEP) at Tinicum School in Essington, a village that the Congressman pointed out would be devastated by the project. To add an additional runway to the airport, the FAA plans to remove 70 homes and 80 businesses and would require the UPS plant, an important part of the area's economy, to relocate. —

“There is already litigation underway because of the FAA's approach to the Environmental Impact Statement for its ill-conceived air-space redesign and it is no surprise that there appears to be many unanswered concerns in the agency's proposal to expand our airport,” said Congressman Sestak. “How will the residents of Essington and Tinicum Township be compensated? Has the FAA considered the full costs of the necessary relocations? Will there be an adverse impact on UPS's operations and plans that would cause it to leave the area? And most importantly, why does the FAA continue to refuse to consider other, more effective alternatives that do not require the bulldozing of Tinicum Township?”

“The current plans cannot go forward without consideration of alternatives. I still have not seen any effort by the FAA to provide the Delaware Valley region with a well-planned, coordinated transportation network that makes full use of other airports in the region and interconnects air transportation with rails and highways to ensure that we have an efficient transportation system that benefits residents and businesses.”

According to the FAA, the CEP would reconfigure the airfield to provide four east-west parallel runways by extending existing Runway 8-26 and adding a new runway near the Delaware River; reconfiguring and expanding the terminal complex; reconfiguring the cargo areas and parking areas; relocating the Air Traffic Control Tower; and relocating navigational aids and lights.

The GAO's review of the air space redesign described the irresponsible approach the FAA has taken in its ineffective attempt to significantly reduce flight delays. According to the GAO, the agency began to implement the redesign without first establishing its costs. The watchdog's report explained that the benefit of the project would be a savings – in 2011 – of only 18 seconds in delay for takeoffs and 45 seconds for landings. Congressman Sestak has supported a legal challenge mounted by local governments against the air space redesign and is working

in Washington to show Congress that it should not appropriate money for a project for which the FAA has not figured the cost. Other measures taken by Congressman Sestak include challenging the City of Philadelphia to meet obligations under its Noise Compatibility Program (NCP), which requires new noise mitigation procedures when flight patterns change as they have as a result of the air space redesign.

"These efforts have the potential to stop this poorly-planned Capacity Enhancement Program and the FAA is being even more irresponsible if it is not considering the impact of them in proposing the CEP," said Congressman Sestak. "Objections to the air space redesign call into question the methods used by the FAA: to determine environmental impact; and to weigh whether the benefits of their proposals are sufficient to move forward with implementation. Action against Philadelphia to compel compliance with the NCP also affects the airport's ability to expand."

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*

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